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Peach-borer, *Dicerca divaricata*, found flying now about peach and cherry trees; *Chrysobothris fulvoguttata*, and *C. Harrisii*, about white pines. The large weevil, *Arrhenodes septentrionalis*, which lives under the bark of the white oak, appears in June and July. The Chinch-bug begins its terrible ravages in the wheat-fields. The various species of *Chrysopa*, or Lace-winged flies, appear during this month.

PROCEEDINGS OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES.

ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES. *Philadelphia, Feb. 6, 1868.* (*Conchological Section.*)—A paper was read by Dr. James Lewis on the distribution of shells in some parts of New York. Mr. W. M. Gabb remarked on shell collecting in Lower California. Dr. Beadle spoke on the great abundance of *Helix desertorum* in the deserts of Sinai.

March 5.—Dr. E. I. Nolan spoke of the iridescence of *Latirus prismaticus*. This shell, when immersed in water, exhibits a beautiful iridescent display of colors, purple predominating, on the entire surface. On microscopic examination he had found that the surface was everywhere covered with an exceedingly fine network of lines, and suggested that the expansion of these lines in water might so decrease the spaces between them as to cause the rays of light falling upon the surfaces to be refracted, thus producing the iridescence observed.

BOSTON SOCIETY OF NATURAL HISTORY. *November 6, 1867.*—Dr. B. G. Wilder made some remarks upon the want of perfect symmetry in the leaves of elms and hop-hornbeams. Professor Agassiz brought forward the results of an examination of the skulls of the American bison and the European aurochs. By means of specimens exhibited, he pointed out the distinctions he had noticed in the two skulls, and stated that these differences were such as to characterize them clearly as distinct species. Professor Agassiz also exhibited the skull of a species of dolphin new to America, discovered upon the coast of Nantucket. The animal was sixteen feet in length.

Nov. 27.—Mr. S. H. Scudder exhibited a curious specimen of "walking-stick" found in this vicinity. One of the fore-legs had been lost in early life and replaced by a new one less than one quarter the length of the other fore-leg. Mr. Trouvelot states that this replacement of the leg can only take place previous to the third moult; the leg was almost perfectly formed, although one of the tarsal joints was wanting, and the foot was unprovided with claws or the usual foot-pad.

Among a number of interesting specimens, Mr. F. G. Sanborn exhibited a dragon-fly with a singular malformation or arrest of development in one wing,—the outer half being abortive,—and the cast-off skin of a young grasshopper impaled on a needle of pine. Specimens like the last were frequently found on leaves of pine or blades of grass, the leaf passing

through the head and out at the back of the insect. As the head always points towards the base of the leaf, Mr. Sanborn believes that when the insects wish to rid themselves of their exuviae, they perch themselves upon a blade of grass or needle of pine, and, thrusting their heads against a contiguous leaf, force the skin backward. He exhibited skins of the plant lice, which, although very minute, had been emptied of their contents by internal parasites. After the transformation of the parasite it had gnawed a nearly complete circle through the dry skin, thus partially detaching a nearly rounded lid or cover through which it could make its escape.

Two of the most curious specimens exhibited were acorn cups which had been used by spiders; in one, the opening had been flatly roofed over with a web, leaving only a small aperture for ingress and egress; in the other, the cup was closed by a finer web with no opening whatever; when examined, neither spider, young, nor eggs were discovered within; this was probably an instance of a curious instinct which leads barren spiders to expend much time and labor in preparing for an imaginary progeny.

Dec. 4.—The Secretary read a paper by Mr. A. S. Bickmore, giving some notes of a short tour on the island of Yesso, Japan.

Dec. 18.—Dr. Pickering referred to Mr. Bickmore's paper on the Ainos, read at the last meeting. He said he had been struck by the description of the treatment of the dead among this people, as similar practices prevailed among the North American Indians; this, he thought, pointed to a common descent. To strengthen his argument, he endeavored to show that the *Ginseng*, or panacea of the Chinese, was obtained from a plant which only grew in the valley of the Ohio; in this case, close communication by the way of the Aleutian Isles must have taken place between the two nations.

The Rev. Mr. Perry read a paper upon the red sandstone of Vermont, and its relations to other rocks. Mr. Perry claimed that the red sandstone was the equivalent of the Potsdam sandstone of the New York geologists, and that the adjacent formations to the eastward were not highly metamorphosed rocks of a more recent period, as has been constantly asserted, but were older than the red sandstone, and lay unconformably beneath it.

Professor Agassiz stated that he had recently been reviewing the Siluroid fishes for the sake of illustrating the definitions he had long since presented for the different categories of structure among animals. The Siluroids had always been considered a natural group; placed, at first, in a single genus which was subsequently divided into two, they were next considered a family including several genera, and finally an order, embracing several groups termed families. Was there then no meaning in the terms genus, family, order? Professor Agassiz urged strongly that the application of these terms should be uniform, since a genus really remains a genus no matter how numerous its subdivisions. He believed that orders were founded upon degrees of complication of structure, and families upon the forms of animals.

Professor Agassiz claimed that the group was an order of Ganoid fishes which should be placed between the sturgeons and garpikes: they had one striking feature in the structure of the jaws, not only reptilian, but bird-like; this was the power of sliding the palatine-bone forward. The brain greatly resembled that of a sturgeon. Four families were mentioned belonging to the order.

Jan. 3.—Mr. George L. Vose read a communication on the flattened and distorted pebbles in the conglomerate near Rangely, Maine. He reviewed the different theories accounting for their form, and exhibited drawings and tracings taken from the stones themselves. He endeavored to show that the changes had occurred when the pebbles were hard, and not necessarily, as urged by Dr. Hitchcock and son, when in a plastic condition. This was best shown by a tracing of one pebble which had been bent over another, and exhibited lines of fracture converging toward the point of resistance, with an abrupt depression of the central portion of the overlying pebble.

Jan. 15.—The Secretary read a paper by Mr. A. M. Edwards, of New York, in which the author attempted to show that the division of the Diatomaceæ into fixed and free genera, was unnatural. He believed that all of these microscopic organisms were free during one portion of their lives, and adherent during another.

Feb. 5.—Dr. T. M. Brewer read a paper on the house-sparrow of Europe, defending it from the charge of destructiveness alluded to in a recent communication by Dr. Pickering. He showed that all the best English ornithologists were either silent on this point or satisfied that the bird did far more good than harm. He read an extract from the report of a commission to the Senate of France, furnishing very strong evidence in favor of the usefulness of the sparrow, and showing that at least one half, and sometimes almost all of its food consisted of destructive insects. The report farther stated that wherever the sparrow had been unwisely banished, injurious insects had immediately increased to such an extent as to become a calamity, destroying crops. In Hungary, Bavaria, and different districts of France, the sparrow had been introduced and stringent laws passed for its protection. One instance was cited where the brood of a single pair had been known to destroy over seven hundred cock-chafers. Dr. Brewer said that the sparrows, recently introduced into New York and the neighboring cities, had cleared the trees of measure-worms so successfully, that, in 1867, the foliage was not known to have been entirely destroyed on a single tree. The birds are already regarded with great favor in New York; commodious, thatched houses have been constructed for them, and, in some of the parks, they are regularly fed.

Great expectations are formed in regard to the services they will render in this country, not only in keeping down the measure-worms, but in destroying canker-worms, caterpillars, and possibly curculios.

NOTE.—We regret that we cannot report more fully the meetings of Scientific Societies. We cannot give the titles of every paper read, or abstracts of all the remarks made, but only those of the most general interest.

DANA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.—We had hoped before this to have found space to notice the good work being done by Mr. A. J. Ebell, who is now lecturing before various educational institutions, and also establishing numerous chapters of the Dana Natural History Society. The Raritan chapter, established at Matawan, N. J., held its first regular meeting at Glenwood Institute, Nov. 4, 1867, when Rev. Samuel Lockwood, a contributor to the NATURALIST, delivered a lecture on the study of Natural History.

The Dana Natural History Society of the North-west College, Evanston, Illinois, have received a number of additions to their Museum begun by selections from Mr. Ebell's cabinet. A lecture was delivered on March 7, in the college chapel, by Mr. Ebell, the proceeds of which are to increase the Museum and Library.

CORRESPONDENCE.

J. W. C., Cheyenne, Dakota.—The snails sent were *Helix Cooperi*, a species peculiar to California and adjacent territory.

C. S. M., Jamaica Plains, Mass.—The name of the shell of which you send a pencil sketch is *Natica heros*. You will find a description of it in Gould's Invertebrata of Massachusetts, p. 231. The work you will find in any public library.

E. H. J., Pawtucket, R. I.—Papers and descriptions of American shells are scattered through the proceedings of the various Scientific Societies. Binney's Terrestrial Mollusca will cost \$30 or \$35. Gould's Invertebrata of Massachusetts, though published nearly thirty years ago, is the best work on New England Shells. A new edition, with all the species illustrated, will be out in the course of a year. As for fresh-water Aquaria, the experience you will gain by a few patient attempts at stocking one, will be worth more than all the books. Be careful not to have too many animals in one tank.

Anon.,* Pen Yan, N. Y.—“The English Cyclopædia,” by Charles Knight. Natural History, in five volumes, 4to, London. Baird's “Cyclopædia of Natural Sciences.” “An Expository Lexicon of above 50,000 ancient and Modern Scientific Terms,” by R. G. Mayne. London (Churchill), £2 10s. 8vo. “Dictionary of Terms used in Geology, with their Derivations,” by D. H. McNicholl, M. D. Small 8vo. 12s. (Reeve & Co.) The two last give the derivations.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

Journal of the Franklin Institute, Philadelphia. January—May, 1868.
The Field. April 12, 19. London.
Cosmos. March 28, April 4, 11. Paris.
Chemical News. May. New York.
Land and Water. March 7-28. London.

* We cannot hereafter notice any anonymous communications.